Jerome P. Malino

THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. 1. May 3, 1935—Nisan 30, 5695 No. 9

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A CONTRIBUTION TO JEWISH FOLK LORE, *by Barnett R. Brickner*

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THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

Vol. 1. May 3, 1935—Nisan 30, 5695 No. 9

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EDITORIALS

A Message With No Address

IN a vigorous and challenging article entitled "Middle-Class into Proletariat" in the April number of the *Jewish Frontier*, Dr. I. M. Rubinow reveals the threatening character of the economic future of the Jews in this country.

"There are some 125 million people in this country, and the census tells us some 50 million are 'gainfully employed' or want to be. Of these 50 million, 11 million are in agriculture, some 31 million in labor, manual or clerical, only about 3½ million in business, large or small, and another 1½ million in professions. If we all crowd into the latter two groups, we shall get all the fire of this competition, and the rivalry of these 5 million, and the envy of the remaining 45 million. *There can be no question that the future of the Jewish group in this country will depend upon the extent to which we can become identified with the 90 per cent of the American people.*" He therefore comes to the conclusion that "there *must* be an occupational redistribution of American Jewry, if there is to be an abatement of economic discrimination and subsidence of the anti-Semitic wave in general."

But the question is: who is going to effect this occupational redistribution? Dr. Rubinow says "We are a group and . . . we cannot escape the results of our group responsibility." That we are a group, in the sense that we appear such to the non-Jewish world or in the sense that we all go by the name "Jew" is undoubtedly true; but that we are a group in the sense that we are so organized as to be able to carry on group functions is definitely not true. We are a mass of mutually competing institutions, an organized chaos.

Is it any wonder then that nothing is being done to meet the danger of being pushed down to the level of the superfluous? There does not exist as yet that agency which can take measures to prevent such an actuality. The "associated leading Jewish organizations" to which Dr. Rubinow appealed four years ago to undertake a "wide and thorough investigation" never acted upon this suggestion because they represented organization for palliative, not for prevention or for planning. Their conception of "group responsibility" was responsibility for the sick and the infirm. They had no interest in the healthy functioning of the Jewish group because they are obsessed with philanthropy.

The only way the Jews can cope with this problem is through the organization of Jewish communities. The temple, the center, the fraternal order, the cultural society, and the union may try from now

until doomsday to influence Jews to spread out into a greater variety of occupations, but it will not do any good, because these organizations cannot possibly guide Jews. They are not equipped with the statistical knowledge of conditions which is essential to any action. Dr. Rubinow is broadcasting a message which bears no address; he calls for accurate information, but there is none to receive the message and act upon its suggestion.

Until American Jewry realizes that *community* organization is absolutely essential to its survival as a self-respecting group, we shall be tobogganing down to economic ruin and come to swell the growing heap of "white trash".

Barking Up the Wrong Tree

THE Jewish communists in America have this year again imitated their comrades in Soviet Russia in conducting an anti-Passover celebration arranged to coincide with the evening of the first Seder. This celebration took the form of a lecture and concert in which those attending were solemnly warned that a proletarian who accepts Passover is guilty of treason to his class. The affair was held under the auspices of the *Freiheit,* the Yiddish communist daily, and was not an official act of the party as such. The incident does, however, raise certain issues that religious groups as well as communists and communist sympathizers had better reckon with.

The attack against Passover flows, of course, from the general communist critique of all religion as an opiate which the ruling class administers to the masses in order to keep them insensitive to their own misery. We do not want to deny that religion, even at the present time, is, in many instances, allied with social, economic, and political status quo. The communist critique comes, however, in the form of a universal proposition, *i.e.*, that religion, in the very nature of things, must ever be the enemy of change. Stated in that form it is, of course, refuted by the facts. How, for example, do the communists account for the prophets, those rebel-seers who tirelessly defied king and country, in battling for the oppressed masses of their day? How do they account for the increasing radicalization of the clergy in our own day? When Bishop McConnell, Dr. Harry F. Ward, and Rabbi Edward Israel recently appeared at the Madison Square Garden mass meeting in defense of civil liberties and of the right of the communist party to function legally—were they administering opium then? The truth is that in religion, as in other phases of culture, we have always had the conservatives and the radicals. To condemn all religion as inherently conservative is, therefore, a perversion of the truth. It is particularly a perversion of truth —and of common sense—to condemn Passover which by the very nature of its origin speaks the message of freedom, and of social justice.

We are concerned not merely because communists are perverting the truth about religion, but because communists are thereby discrediting the cause of social reconstruction. Through such tactics they set up a wall between the radical movement and the great masses of people who, for all the propaganda of the communist, still prefer to remain within the framework of their religious tradition. Social conservatism should be fought in religion as it is fought in every other manifestation of culture. But the people who can fight it most effectively are the religious radicals who stand within the tradition of religion itself.

Communist strategy, in making the work of the religious radical more difficult is, therefore, more than an injustice to religion—it is an act of treason to the cause of the oppressed and the disinherited whose redemption it retards.

Praying for Peace

WHEN the German government recently declared the emancipation from the armaments clause of the Versailles Treaty, and proceeded to build up, openly and defiantly, a formidable fighting force, it seemed as though the clouds of war, that had been hanging in the European skies for the last five years, would at last burst into a storm. At that dramatic and fearful moment, a call was issued by the Pope and taken up by other religious denominations. It was a call to prayer, urging religious men and women to utter their petitions to God for peace.

For those who hold to the theurgic conception of prayer, the answer to this call should cause those clouds of war to be dispersed. Praying for peace, from their point of view, is a legitimate and potent weapon with which to combat war. And even for those who believe that prayer, earnestly uttered, effects a psychological transformation in the worshipper, this summons to religious expression must appear to be an effective instrument for peace.

We should like, however, to submit that this emphasis laid upon prayer is an unfortunate one. Prayer, by itself, may do more harm than good, for the one who prays for a worthwhile ideal somehow gets the impression that he has done something positive to achieve that ideal. The psychological effect is a curious one; praying becomes a substitute for action. Religious leaders who have been interested in the whole problem of prayer have always maintained that people are reluctant to pray because the traditional prayers are couched in archaic language and express irrelevant aspirations. Modernize prayers, they said, make them relevant, and people will once again take to praying. The fact is that the more relevant the prayer, the more likely is the worshipper to feel he has worked for the realization of those values which he affirms. The practice of confession works the same way; the cathartic effect of listing one's sins is to create the mistaken impression that they have been expiated.

It is extremely interesting that the Rabbis placed study above prayer, because "study leads to action". One Rabbi was chided for lingering over his prayers and neglecting his studies, and the reason for the reprimand was that he was sacrificing *ha-olam ha-ba*, which the Torah gains, for *ha-olam ha-zeh*, which is all that prayer can achieve. It might well be said that prayer, without study, provides only satisfaction, emotional release; study can help to bring about the new "world to come". Study, in Jewish thought, was a sacred religious duty. It is as such that it must again be urged in relation to the menace of war.

If the religious authorities of the world want really to be effective in the prevention of war, let them call upon their people to *study* the causes of war. Let them investigate the problem of foreign markets, of conspiring munitions manufacturers, of nationalist hysteria and imperialist war. If all that were needed to insure peace were an abhorrence of war and its evils prayer alone would be sufficient. But since the only way to exterminate evil is to trace it to its causes and to resort to the process of removing them, knowledge and action are indispensable. If action is beyond the scope of religious bodies, knowledge and the spreading of it are the only justification of their existence.

Stoppage of Jewish Instruction

THANKS to the joint action of the Jewish teachers organizations, New York City is to witness a one day stoppage of Jewish instruction in its Hebrew schools, Talmud Torahs and religious schools. The long patient Jewish teacher has decided to resort to self-help, since he has waited in vain for aid from his constituted superiors in his struggle against hunger and despair.

Through union activity, he hopes to call attention to his own plight and to make public his demands.

That these demands are modest and just, any fairminded person will agree. All that the Jewish teacher asks is that his salary be paid regularly, according to promise or contract, and according to a graduated scale based upon standards of minimum subsistence and security, period of service, professional qualification and affiliation. Any one conversant with the facts knows of the neglect and abuse which Jewish teachers have suffered during recent years. Salaries have remained unpaid for months and even years, and contractual responsibilities to the teachers have been legally or illegally evaded by the constituted authorities.

Honorable lay workers and self-sacrificing leaders, both lay and professional, in Jewish life will regard with sympathy the impending move of the teachers organizations, even though they may question the wisdom of separatist action and trade union tactics or ideology as applied to the Jewish teaching profession. These workers and leaders will acknowledge with sorrow and shame the fact that the teacher's cry "Whence cometh my help?" seems to be heeded by none save the union. Because they are sincerely interested, these leaders, lay workers and parents know that sensitive and thoughtful children will not develop a love or respect for Judaism if its teachers are starved, degraded or miserable human beings. Though these laymen be seriously concerned about *hilul hashem* and the fair name of the Jewish people, they will recall the traditional practice of *"stopping the Reading of the Torah,"* when individuals had no other redress against wrongs than to appeal to the conscience of Jews and to stop its normal functioning. At the same time these friendly folks may ask the practical question: Will the *"stopping of the Teaching of Torah"* for a day or more produce the desired results in the present situation? Where there are lacking a Jewish community consciousness and a Jewish community conscience, how can Jewish public opinion be stirred or expressed?

Herein lie the sad fate and condition of the Jewish teacher. Jewish education in this country is still a private, voluntary, self-imposed interest. It is not compulsory. Pending the constitution of a reconstructed society, where minority culture and religious groupings will receive their due encouragement from state aid, Jewish values and ideals must derive their expression through voluntary group organization, and self-assumed responsibility. Jewish public opinion requires a democratic agency, voluntarily accepted and not externally imposed in order to attain its fulfillment. Even anti-Semitism does not compel a Jew to support Jewish education. It requires public education to make Jews accept and keep self-imposed Jewish responsibilities.

Can trade union methods save the Jews for Jewish education? As an economic tool the trade union may be used to combat the profit motive of business or to control the taxing powers of government. What is the motivation for the support of Jewish education? What are its taxing powers? How can the union control any but its own members? Assuming that by controlling the qualified teachers it can raise the tuition fee rates and impose greater obligations upon directors and trustees, would it not require a process of educating parents as well as *baale-batim* to want to accept the extra burden or responsibilities involved? Since Jewish education is regarded by many of them as a luxury rather than a necessity, may not measures of coercion cause American Jews to be satisfied with cheap and superficial values which in practice will defeat the very purposes of the Jewish teaching profession? To the extent that the union is a democratic tool, which may be used to organize Jewish community life, or to command material support from other unions for raising

standards in Jewish education, economic or professional, it may yet become a useful agency in American Jewish life. To the extent, however, that Jewish educational activity depends upon voluntarism for its motivation and control, parent and teacher, layman and professional worker, who are directly concerned, must work cooperatively toward a common goal, namely, community organization and responsibility.

National Jewish Book Week

IGNORANCE is one of the crucial causes of the disintegration of Jewish life in this country. A generation has grown up almost completely unfamiliar with the literature which bears the results of Israel's creative energies; and this ignorance has led Jews to assume an attitude either of indifference or of antagonism.

Until recently, however, there were perhaps some extenuating circumstances. The vital literature of the Jewish people was simply not available in English; and what was available was couched in archaic language or was published with that unique lack of organization characteristic of rabbinic books. As for books about Jews, dealing with history, sociology, religion, folklore, etc., the lay American Jewish reader had little to choose from. The major concern of Jewish scholarship was the unearthing of manuscripts and the editing of obscure texts for the edification of other scholars. The plain Jew was neglected altogether.

This situation does not prevail any longer; today there is no excuse for the Jew who is not an expert Hebraist or scholar to be absolutely ignorant of Jewish literature. There are hundreds of books available in English touching upon every phase of the Jewish past and present. That fact is not known as generally as it should be known, and it is for that reason that we welcome the National Jewish Book Week which for the ninth consecutive year has been aside to focus attention upon Jewish books. From May 19 to 25, the week in which *Lag B'omer* occurs, the "Scholars' Festival" of earlier days, resurrected in the form of Jewish Book Week, will be observed in many cities in America.

It is a sad commentary upon the state of Jewish life that Jewish Book Week must take its place along with Apple Week, Mother's Day, and the sundry other weeks and days that stud the calendar of American life. The People of the Book made every week Jewish Book Week. But since we have become the people of the tabloid and the detective story magazine, we require the stimulus of a designated observance to make us conscious of our slipping intellectual standards. At a time when certain countries preach the gospel of anti-intellectualism, and turn with contempt upon the accumulated wisdom of civilized experience, it devolves upon those who have lived by the guidance of the written word to reinstate learning in its former place of primacy. In an age when books are burned for fear of the liberating power they possess, Jews should rededicate themselves to the advancement of the cause of literature.

Jewish Book Week can serve another purpose. It can help the open-minded non-Jew to realize that the truth about the Jew can be learned better from the testimony of Jewish literature than from the irresponsible utterances of those who seek to harm us. If goodwill can be achieved at all through a knowledge of our people's life and history, it becomes the duty of every Jew to become acquainted with books about the Jewish people to which he may refer his non-Jewish neighbor. A catalogue of such books has been published by the Boston Public Library, entitled "Judaica," which may be obtained by application to the enterprising librarian of the West End Branch of that Library, Miss Fanny Goldstein.

If American Jews evinced a greater interest in Jewish books, we should find that many more writers would produce works of value who now hesitate to publish on the ground that the demand for their books is meagre. We sincerely hope that the widespread celebration of Jewish Book Week this year will give impetus to those who have some contribution to make to the literature of our people.

Should Jews Be Socialists?

By IRA EISENSTEIN

IT is generally believed that Jews are inclined to be radical. Like most beliefs about the character and activities of Jews in this country the one concerning the political and economic tendencies and affiliations of the Jewish people never has been accurately ascertained; but the notion prevails nevertheless.

For lack of statistics, those who maintain that Jews have a predilection for radical theories do so on sociological grounds. They point to the critical objectivity with which, they believe, most Jews approach the civilization they have adopted. Constituting, as they do, a population of either immigrants or children of immigrants, they have not the consciousness of a long American tradition. Places, names and events, which form the pattern of the patriotic consciousness, are not felt by Jews to be their own. Strangers are more likely to place their reason above their sentiment and, although Jews may honestly believe themselves to be completely adjusted to the environment of the American scene, subconsciously they are still strangers; and the detachment with which they can observe the trends of social and economic life makes it possible for them to analyze them clearly. Their perception is not blurred by the mists of emotion.

Another reason why it is supposed that Jews challenge the status quo is that they suffer more keenly from it. As a result of their Jewishness, they are subject to additional economic disadvantages. A long enduring depression may not succeed in throwing Americans into the arms of radicalism; but that depression, assisted by anti-Jewish discrimination, turns the trick.

The fact of the matter is, however, that the Jews of this country are generally conservative. I can produce no more statistics for this view than for its opposite, but it seems to me that there are more potent sociological factors making for reaction in Jews than for radicalism.

First, the very fact that Jews do constitute an immigrant and second generation American population predisposes them to conservatism. The masses of Jews that came to this country fled from the most dreadful kind of tyranny and persecution. They came from lands where liberty was completely unknown, where the very sight of an official uniform terrorized them. Their lot in their native lands was a pitiful one. They enjoyed no opportunities for economic or professional advancement. They were granted practically no political rights. Socially, they were altogether ostracized. By comparison, America was paradise. They arrived, for the most part, during a period of American history in which the country was making

its most powerful strides. There were enough opportunities for everyone, and in such an expanding country Jews found ample room for their talents and their energies. Jews began to enter professions, politics and the commercial world and made an astounding success of their undertakings. What gratitude this engendered! The contrast between their new lives and their old ones was so striking and so dramatic that America seemed to them to be, indeed, a "Golden Land" and a deep seated patriotism developed. In one generation, Jews became conscious of a sense of profound unity with this new land of their adoption. Great faith in its possibilities and an abiding loyalty to the institutions of political and economic life which were responsible for their new freedom grew up in this generation of Jews.

Another reason for their satisfaction with the prevailing scheme of things comes also from the very fact that they are a minority. The circumstance which, it is alleged, accounts for their resentment seems, on the contrary, to be the cause of their caution. Somewhere in their subconsciousness, they feel that they are strangers and that strangers have no right to criticize, especially when they have been received so cordially. It is not only a matter of etiquette—it is also a matter of fear. So essentially uncertain are they of their newly acquired status that they somehow are afraid that non-conformity and fault-finding will drive them back to their former dreaded state. Despite the protests of America's political philosophers and the assurances of America's political documents, they are not quite certain that they will be tolerated if they do not hold respectable and conventional opinions.

A third reason for my feeling that Jews tend to be conservative has nothing to do with their being Jews, except in an indirect way. The forces of circumstances, tradition and temperament have led Jews into the middle class. It is not necessary here to trace in detail the backgrounds of these forces. It is quite readily conceded that the predominant number of Jews in this country are of the middle class, unlike many other foreign elements, who are concentrated in the mines and the stockyards. And because Jews are of the middle class, they share the attitudes of all middle class people. They stand between the powerful industrialists and bankers, and the workers whom they employ. Socially and economically, they strive toward the upper classes. They are social climbers. They would like to be accepted by rich people as equals because wealth to them is a criterion of worth. If they cannot achieve the heights of social and economic prominence, they respect the owning and powerful class from afar. They admire the intelligence and the skill that placed these members of that class where they are and, on the other hand, they look down upon those who, it seems to them, were inept or lazy and who failed to rise on the social ladder. Their contempt is fortified by their fear that the poor may covet what they, the middle, and the wealthy classes, possess. It seems to them that the workers are trying to take forcibly what they could not acquire through their own "honest" efforts.

The Jews as middle class people, therefore, put their faith in the successful class. They feel a close bond of union with them as though they were made of the same clay and, in economic crises, they are always more likely to throw in their lot with the possessing class than with the workers.

When we survey the condition of Jewish life in America, we observe that it is these Jews who form the bulwark of Jewish institutions and organizations. Practically all those who have exerted themselves to keep Judaism alive in America have come from that group. Religious and educational institutions have been supported by them, and in those instances where the wealthy

assimilationist Jews have taken control, it is the middle class Jews who have taken advantage of the opportunities which those organizations and institutions provided. For the most part, however, they are both the benefactors and beneficiaries of Jewish life. The workers among our people have been too much preoccupied with the struggle for their existence to be concerned very much with the future of Judaism. The psychology of the rich Jew has been to attempt to reduce Jewish life to a meaningless minimum. There are indeed many defections from Jewish life in the ranks of the middle class, but the larger number still want to be Jews, want their children to be brought up as Jews and would consider it a calamity of the first order if Judaism, no matter what they conceived it to be, should disappear.

It is to these Jews who cherish Jewish life, who hold the Jewish way of life in affection and who, at the same time, are frightened off by radical economic and political views, that I wish to address myself. They regard radicalism as inimical to the welfare of the Jewish people and of Jewish life. My thesis is that the future of Jewish life depends to a very great extent upon the acceptance by this large class of Jews of a philosophy of economic and social life which today they reject tremblingly. I believe that if they really sought the best for the Jewish life which they believe they hold sacred, they would direct their energies toward the establishment of a socialist commonwealth in America.

II

The present economic system, which is a system of competition and capitalism, holds out little hope for the Jewish people or for Jewish life. I shall first discuss the effects of this system upon the Jewish people.

In any competition, it is always advantageous to reduce the number of competitors to a minimum. The fewer in the race, the greater the chances of victory. While it is true that in the early stages of capitalism there were limitless possibilities and opportunities, the subsequent developments of that system has narrowed the field. So critical has the economic condition become in highly industrialized countries like Germany that it has been necessary to find some means, whether fair or foul, to eliminate large masses of people from the competition. To this end, it has been necessary to find some group which can be made the scapegoat. The result in Germany is painfully evident. In this country, the same logic of events is producing a more and more virulent anti-Semitism. It is interesting to observe that until very recently anti-Jewish discrimination in this country was denied, not only by non-Jews, but by Jews themselves who felt that to ascribe such attitudes and activities to America was to impugn the sacred character of its people. Jews considered themselves the more devoted to the country if they shut their eyes to the facts. Until recently, it was not difficult to do this. Anti-Semitism was still being practiced subtly and surreptitiously. But the last five years of economic distress have brought anti-Semitism into the light. Today nobody denies that it exists. Many non-Jews do not even take the trouble to deplore it. Many Jews are taking it for granted as though it were an inherent quality of human life.

There is no doubt that there are other causes for anti-Semitism besides the economic one. Certainly the influence of Christian teachings cannot be gainsaid; but these teachings would be as little heeded by Christians as are the main body of religious and moral doctrines of the church, if it were not for the fact that while the preachings of morality interfere with business, the humiliation of Jews is, in a sense, good for business.

The kind of class society in which we live, furthermore, has been shown by theorists and by experience ultimately to work terrific hardships upon the middle class. As competition becomes fiercer, those who produce tend more and more to reach the consumer directly. By eliminating the middleman, they can sell more cheaply and the Jews, being to a great extent engaged in middleman activities, lose their function. Gradually, they are pressed into the proletarian class. Their existence is thus becoming more precarious as a result of this combination of anti-Semitism and capitalist evolution.

From the point of view of Jewish life, the present system is devastating. The very existence of minority cultures is discouraged and every possible obstacle is placed in their way because the system, which leads to imperialism and ultimately to war, demands that the nation be prepared at all times to present a united front for military action. Such a united front, in turn, demands as homogeneous a population as possible, a population which speaks a common language, in the literal and in the more general sense of that term. That kind of national spirit is necessary which will succeed in transcending all other considerations and loyalties in the interests of the warring nation. For this reason, identification with any culture or national life other than the dominant one is looked upon as an entering wedge into the solidarity of the potential fighting unit.

Jewish life has not been compelled so much to defend itself ideologically, because officially it is considered religious and the State guarantees the freedom of religion; but practically, the trend of American life has been to crowd out Jewish life. Thus, the economic system exploits an otherwise fine and enriching thing for the purpose of creating a cultural unit which can be whipped into chauvinistic fury when war looms.

Another serious blow to Jewish life comes from the circumstance that it is confined to the one class, namely, the middle class. As I have intimated above, the two extremes of workers and wealthy Jews do not find a place in the active life of the Jewish people,—the latter for social reasons and the former for economic reasons. It actually costs too much to be a Jew. Demands are constantly made for the maintenance of institutions, high dues are required for affiliation with congregations, and the middle class, which has been bearing the brunt of the burden until now (inadequately) is rapidly coming to find that it cannot bear it much longer. But even more serious is the fact that the class society has cut Jews into classes and the social interaction among all Jews, which is indispensable to the wholesome functioning of Jewish life, is rendered almost impossible. The differences in the standards of living, and in economic interests have split the Jewish people. Does it not begin to appear that many of the causes for the disintegration of Jewish life in America can be traced to the present economic setup?

III

How would socialism help? Socialism would help primarily by eliminating the profit motive and the competitive order by establishing an economy in which production would be for use, not for profit, in which wealth would be justly distributed. There would no longer be any necessity, economically speaking, for anti-Semitism. Once competition is eliminated, the swamps of Jew-hatred would be drained. There would be no further necessity for finding a scapegoat to bear the sins of an exploiting society. It would no longer be necessary to crush Jews out of the economic life. The kindling wood of anti-Jewish doctrine preached by whomsover, would not be set afire by the flame of self-interest. In a system where economic planning is possible, as it is not possible in an individualistic order, it would not be necessary to seek

foreign markets with imperialist arms. The masses of people would become the greater consumers of the nation's goods, and not the victims of other nations' armaments. It would no longer be necessary to insist upon that wholly integrated population which is indispensable for the mobilization of a loyal army of combatants and non-combatants to carry on international conflicts. The fear of foreign cultures would be assuaged. When the economic system no longer needs to exploit the nationalistic sentiment, minority cultures can begin to flourish.

Once the dread of insecurity is lifted from the shoulders of Jews, they could again express themselves through Jewish life. In a classless society, the unity of the Jewish people could once more become a reality. No fears, no recriminations, no jealousies would estrange one class of Jews from another. The very structure of Jewish life itself would be transformed in a collectivist society. Influenced, as Jews are, by their dominant environment, they have introduced individualism into Jewish life, reflecting the competitive character of their surroundings. They have permitted competition to prevail and to persist between one Jewish cause and another, between one Jewish institution and another, between congregation and congregation. No communal organizations exist which serve the whole Jewish people. The chaos that is manifest in the larger economic scene has been duplicated in the Jewish scene. But in a society in which collectivism is the norm, in which cooperation and group action are the order of the day, Jewish life would also follow suit. Just as a planned economy is impossible under our present system, so a planned integrated Jewish life is impossible, and without a planned program executed on a broad community basis Jewish life breaks up into fragments and quickly dissipates its energies. Socialism is necessary to America; the socialist community is essential for Jewish life and without socialism the socialized Jewish community cannot be achieved.

Now it undoubtedly has been said that for Jews to preach socialism is to stir up anti-Semitism. This contention is based upon a superficial understanding of the cause of anti-Semitism. Nobody really hates Jews for what they believe or disbelieve about the economic system. If that were the case, it would be impossible to charge Jews, as they are charged, with distinctly contradictory actions, namely that on the one hand they control international capital and that on the other hand they are radicals. Obviously the charges are not based on facts or real situations. They are uttered variously by various people, depending upon who the audience happens to be. The effect desired is always the same—to find a good excuse for forcing the Jews out. At present, I maintain neither of the charges mentioned is true to any great extent. One of them, however, should be true, that is, that Jews are socialists. As long as we are going to be accused, let us be accused legitimately of something which makes for equality, justice and the possibility for Jewish life to exist.

IV

When I advocate socialism for the sake of Jewish life, I do so fully conscious of the fact that the word "socialism" bears a sinister connotation in the minds of middle class people. This is extremely unfortunate for it seems to me that the system of life which socialism projects is the only one of the various alternatives which the world offers today which can save both the Jew and Judaism. The other alternatives are fascism and communism. A choice must be made quickly. We face what William James would call "a live option". Things cannot go on as they are. If no great pressure is exerted, we will find ourselves catapulted into one or the other undesirable extremes.

Fascism, on the one hand, is the logical and inevitable form of political and economic life which will gain control if the forces of reaction are not checked. Fascism brings with it an intensification of all the evils of the present system. It accentuates class differences, it stimulates more intense nationalism, it preaches a repudiation of peace. Mussolini recently expounded the philosophy of fascism and, among other things, he said that perpetual peace is neither possible nor desirable among nations. Fascism in Germany brought to a head the long-festering sore of anti-Semitism. If, under comparatively tranquil conditions, anti-Semitism exists, in the state of perpetual emergency which fascism represents, anti-Semitism maintains a consistently high virulence. Fascism means the further depression of the standards of life, the more cruel exploitation of the masses. In a fascist state, the alien, the stranger, the member of a foreign tradition is suspected and persecuted. As the highest expression of political and economic nationalism, internationalism of any kind is stamped out. It matters very little in a crisis, that induces fascism, that a nation has traditions of hospitality or of tolerance. It is a mistake to assume that any appeal to these traditions will stand in the way of the forces that make for a fascist dictatorship; and the Jew who is the internationalist *par excellence* must be exposed to the most painful treatment. The case of Germany cannot be ignored. What happened there can very well happen here; and in Germany the Jews have been reduced to a state of miserable subjugation. With this objective attained, Germany makes certain that its homogeneity is insured by fostering the cultivation of Jewish life. This is a logical and understandable thing, for the fascist powers desire to keep the Jews identifiable. They do not want them to penetrate again into the life of the larger nation, and it is only through the functioning of a positive Jewish life that Hitler can maintain a clear separation between the Germans and the Jews. Thus, fascism makes it possible for Judaism to survive, but it does not permit Jews to live. Such an intolerable state of affairs cannot serve as an attractive model for Jews in other lands.

It is not sufficient merely to indicate to American Jews that fascism carries with it inevitably the shame and degradation of their people. It is equally necessary to warn them that fascism is a real menace to America. We are not comparing theories now. We are discussing real possibilities. The symptoms of the fascist movement can be seen by those who have eyes to see them. Unemployment is rising here, wages are being lowered, civil liberties are being flagrantly violated, anti-Semitism is on the rise, economic opportunities are dwindling, preparations for war are being frantically planned and executed. Demagogues are already broadcasting their incitements across the country, radicalism of any kind is being hunted and squelched, pacifism is being discredited. The recent student demonstration strike against war was sabotaged in scores of communities. No one can observe these serious manifestations of growing imperialism and dwindling liberties without realizing that we are passing through a critical period. We cannot counter these tendencies by appeals to justice. They must be countered by a movement that proposes a program diametrically opposed to them.

V

Communism is undoubtedly diametrically opposed to fascism, but I cannot possibly recommend it to any Jew who is sincerely devoted to Jewish life. While fascism brings Judaism to life over the prostrate bodies of Jews, communism seeks to bring Jews to life over the prostrate body of Judaism. Any philosophy of life which rules out religion unequivocally as an absolutely vicious force would naturally strive to exterminate Jewish life, which is sat-

urated with religious traditions and ideals. We have, of course, not only the theory of communism to judge by but the practice of it in Russia. There, Zionism, so indispensable to the future of Jewish life, is forbidden and Zionists are persecuted. Every conceivable regulation is enforced so that the Torah be forgotten among Jews. Anti-religious societies, acting with the blessing of the authorities, try to uproot every vestige of Jewish practice and commemoration.

It is quite beside the point here to attempt to demonstrate that the attitude which communism takes toward Jewish life is an utterly mistaken and misguided one. It would take us too far afield to indicate how far-reaching is the contrast between Jewish religious life and the predatory ecclesiastical powers which communism sets out to destroy, and it is not relevant to show how the economic objectives of communism may be reconciled with the existence of Jewish life. The fact is that communism is the sworn enemy of everything that smacks of religion and of Hebraic Jewish nationalism. With a dogmatism which dwarfs even medieval fanaticism, it claims the unique possession of all social and economic truth and any attempt made to criticize communism for its anti-religious doctrines is readily interpreted by its followers as an indication that the critic is a fascist. To question the validity of even one minute dogma makes one a heretic and hence a devout believer in exploitation, injustice and war. Especially heinous a crime is it, in their eyes, to reject as fallacious and bad any aspect of their complete philosophic formulation, even were one to sympathize with their economic objectives.

This rigidity of thought must not prejudice Jews, however, against socialism, with which it is so often coupled. Those who resist any change in the existing social order are prone to identify socialism with communism. As a matter of fact, so very different are they from each other in their attitudes that communists consider socialism as deadly a foe as capitalism itself. Just as Jews who are not familiar with the inner life of their non-Jewish neighbors place Catholicism and Protestantism in one category of Christianity, without realizing how vast a chasm stretches between them, the conservatives unfamiliar with radical movements, are not aware of the crucial differences that exist between the socialist and the communist. Indeed, it is this very confusion of the two movements which has made it so difficult for socialism to win converts among Jews who take Jewish life seriously. It has been suggested that socialism call itself by another name in order to preclude confusion, and certain groups have even organized new movements, based upon socialist ideals, bearing altogether different titles. Such a movement is the "New America" movement which is dedicated to the "breakdown of the profit system" and the establishment of a "planned and democratically controlled social economy which will enable all people to enjoy the highest standard of living and the fullest cultural development".

But whether Jews identify themselves with "New America" or any other movement which shares its ideals, the crucial matter is this: that the future of Jewish life depends upon the extent to which the present system is replaced by one that abolishes the social evils we now endure.

BOOK REVIEW

A Contribution to Jewish Folklore

HASIDIC ANTHOLOGY, Louis I. Newman and Samuel S. Spitz. Scribners. New York, 1934.

Professor Graham Sumner, author of that epoch making sociological work "Folkways" was correct when he indicated that the true nature of a people's life, their hopes, their sufferings, their dreams may be gleaned better from their mythology and folklore than from their formal philosophy, ethics and theology. It is profoundly significant, therefore, that those who have lost touch with Jewish life should have the opportunity of returning to it through the medium of folklore rather than through formal study in some field of Jewish scholarship. This opportunity is at hand in the "Hasidic Anthology" by Louis I. Newman and his collaborator, Samuel S. Spitz. This book is welcome, however, for its own intrinsic merits as well, as a genuine contribution to the whole field of folklore.

It contains over seven hundred pages, an excellent table of contents that classifies the thousands of parables, folktales, aphorisms, epigrams, sayings, anecdotes, proverbs, exegetical interpretations of Hasidic rabbis and their disciples, translated from innumerable Hebrew, Yiddish and German sources. It would have been interesting for Dr. Newman to have told us, just for the sake of satisfying our curiosity, how many stories the Anthology actually does contain.

The classification is arranged alphabetically, containing over two hundred subjects—a veritable gold mine, particularly for rabbis, writers and teachers, of tales which should be used to salt and pepper the material that these molders of Jewish opinion present, even as writers, teachers and preachers among other peoples use Aesop's Fables and the classical mythologies. There is also a very elaborate series of indices, covering biblical and Talmudic references to writings of Hasidic rabbis and a very comprehensive alphabetically arranged index.

Dr. Newman's introduction about Hasidism, its history, literature and doctrines, should be of particular interest to students of Hasidism. In the main, what Dr. Newman has done here is to give us a very comprehensive, though not too original compilation of much of the material that is extant on the nature of Hasidism. Though I read this introduction with interest, for it is written in a most readable style, I did not find that it added anything to what we already know of Hasidism; and it fails to throw new light on Hasidism as a religio-mystic phenomenon.

Jews, unlike Christians, do not write theologies, even though they are a deeply religious people. The proof of this may be seen in the constant expanding and deepening of the content of their religious life, of which Hasidism is a manifestation. Because of the absence of a Jewish theology, or *the* Jewish theology, those who write on Hasidism should indicate how Hasidism is a contribution to the field of the mystical and the religious domains, and as such it represents one of the creative aspects of religious development. Dr. Newman does touch upon this in his chapter on the "Oral and Written Tradition," but that section is entirely too brief. I hope that some day, because of his fine qualifications, he will give us a treatise on Hasidism from this point of view.

To quote from Dr. Newman's story of the Kobriner Rebbi: he once asked

the Slonimer Rebbi "Have your teachers left any writings as a heritage?" and receiving an affirmative reply, the Kobriner asked, "are they printed or are they still in manuscript?"

"Neither," said the Slonimer, "they [illegible]nscribed in the hearts of their disciples."

What we need to do now is to make them radiate from the hearts of the disciples, to tell the whole world about them. In giving us the source material so voluminously, Dr. Newman has made it possible for us to tell the world that we still have a passion for religious thinking and living, despite the apparent so-called secularistic thinking that overshadows so much of Jewish writing today.

The stories are not all of equal worth, but that it is to be expected in such a heterogeneous conglomeration of tales and sayings culled from so many different sources. Another compiler might have left out some of those sayings and homiletical interpretations that seem to have no point. I take it that they were included because the compilers wished to give us a representative cross-section of this literature.

In the rewriting and translation, many of the stories lost some of that flavor of the original which is contained in the language—in the Yiddish or the Hebrew. This is but natural. It indicates that it is impossible to translate the heartbeat of a people from the tonal mode in which it expresses itself to an entirely different tonal mode. And yet, on the whole, they have done a commendable piece of work.

I hope that the time will soon come when Jews will have these stories at their finger tips, even as cultivated Englishmen have the stories of the classics at their fingertips. It will be a mark and a test of the true deepening of Jewish consciousness. Now that it is available, the teachers of our religious schools particularly should avail themselves of this Anthology for the wonderful possibilities it contains in enriching nearly every subject taught in the Jewish curriculum. This book should grace every Jewish home, and parents and children should read from it, *en passant.*

BARNETT R. BRICKNER.

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